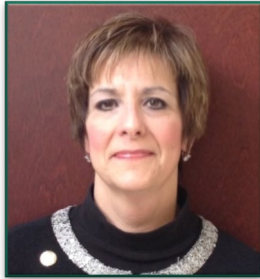


# Building Cultures of Well-Being: Students on the Autism Spectrum



BINGHAMTON  
UNIVERSITY  
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

## Binghamton University presenters



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## About Binghamton University

- **1 of 4 University Centers** in the State University of New York (SUNY) system of 64 campuses
- Located in the **southern tier of New York State**, 80 miles south of Syracuse, on 930 acres of a wooded hillside above the Susquehanna River
- Students come from **50 states & 100+ countries**
- **SAT** (average) **1370**; **ACT** (average) **29.8**

### Fall 2018 Data

Undergraduates:	14,021
Graduates:	3,747
Total Enrollment:	17,768





## Objectives include:

- ✓ Recognize autism as a rapidly growing part of campus diversity (neurodiversity).
- ✓ Understand the unique and complex challenges in successfully transitioning to higher education.
- ✓ Identify key strengths and weaknesses in campus culture/programming/academics that affect the well-being of this subpopulation and the campus community as a whole.

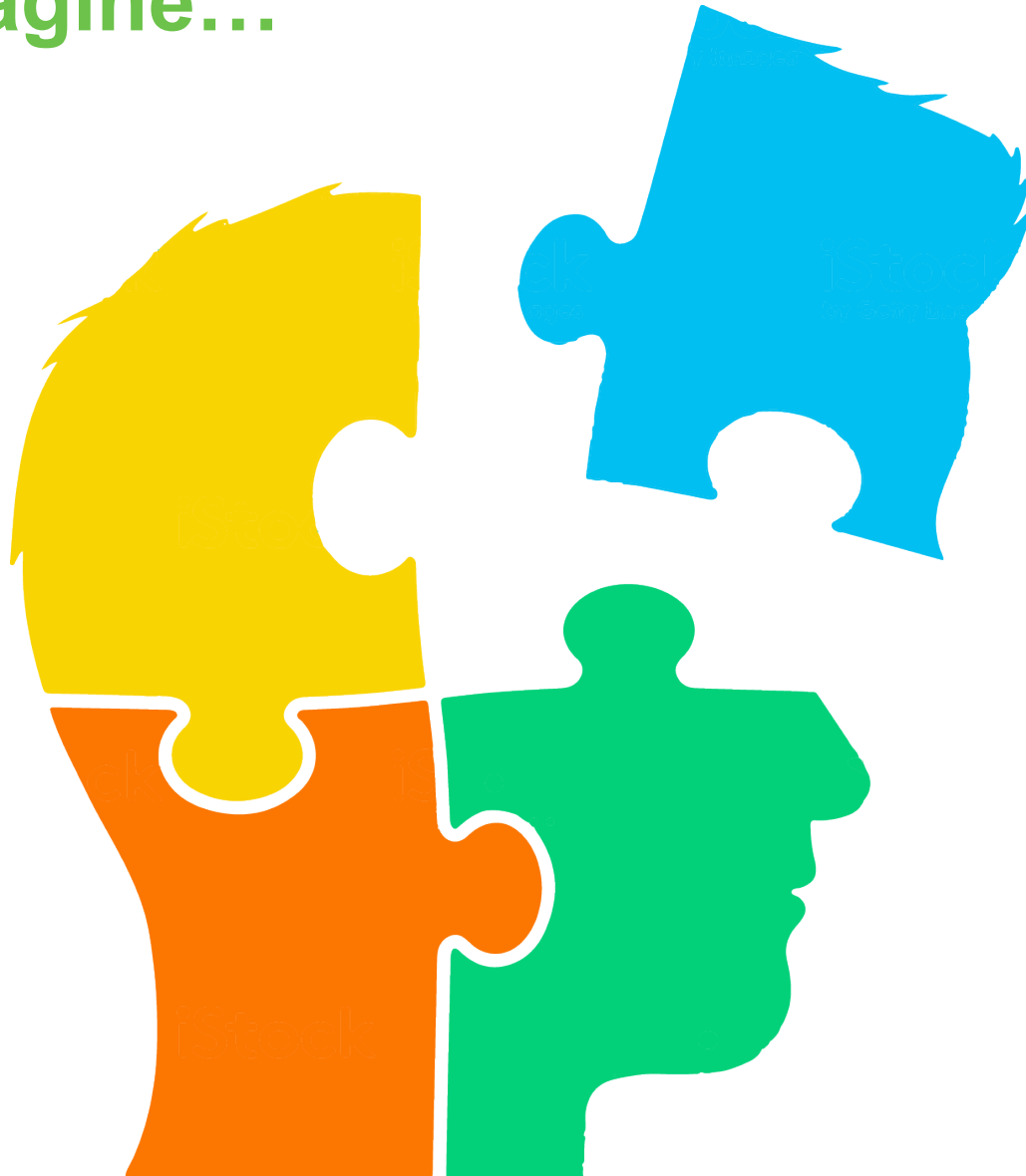
# Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI) Mission

*Through collaborative efforts across Binghamton University's divisions, the Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI) strives to cultivate a culture and environment of health and well-being that is supportive of individuals and groups in pursuit of their optimal potential.*

## Purpose

- ✓ Generate a University identity which encourages **awareness of healthy living** options
- ✓ Effectively **change the culture** and improve campus health
- ✓ **Improve students' capacity to learn**, reduce impediments to academic performance and improve coping strategies and psychological health
- ✓ **Support workplace wellness** to positively impact employee health and job satisfaction, boost engagement and enhance productivity

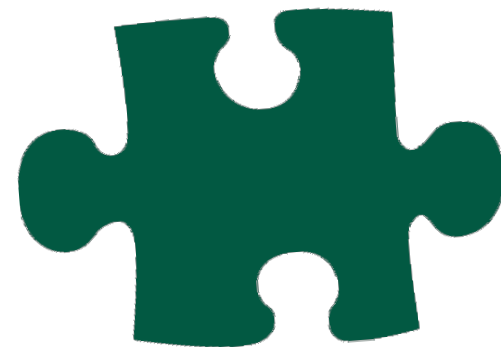
Just imagine...



# What is Autism?

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with:

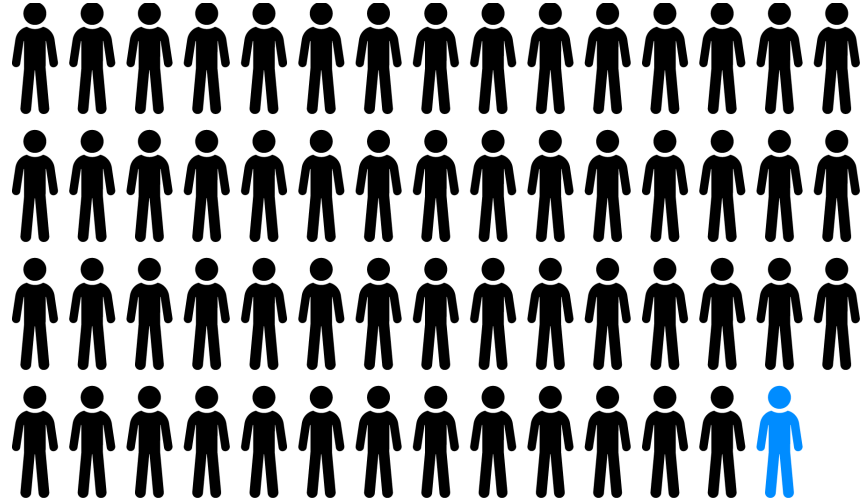
- social skills
- repetitive behaviors
- speech and nonverbal communication
- difficulty building friendships appropriate to their age
- changes in their environment



“...Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support...” — *AutismSpeaks.org*

## National statistics

- Rate of Autism in the general population:  
**1 in 59**



- **35%** of 18-year-olds with autism attend college
- Only **38.8%** graduate (Newman et al., 2011)
- **85%** unemployment rate among college graduates with autism



# Co-morbidity in the Autism population

Many students with ASD have comorbid disabilities such as:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- OCD
- ADHD

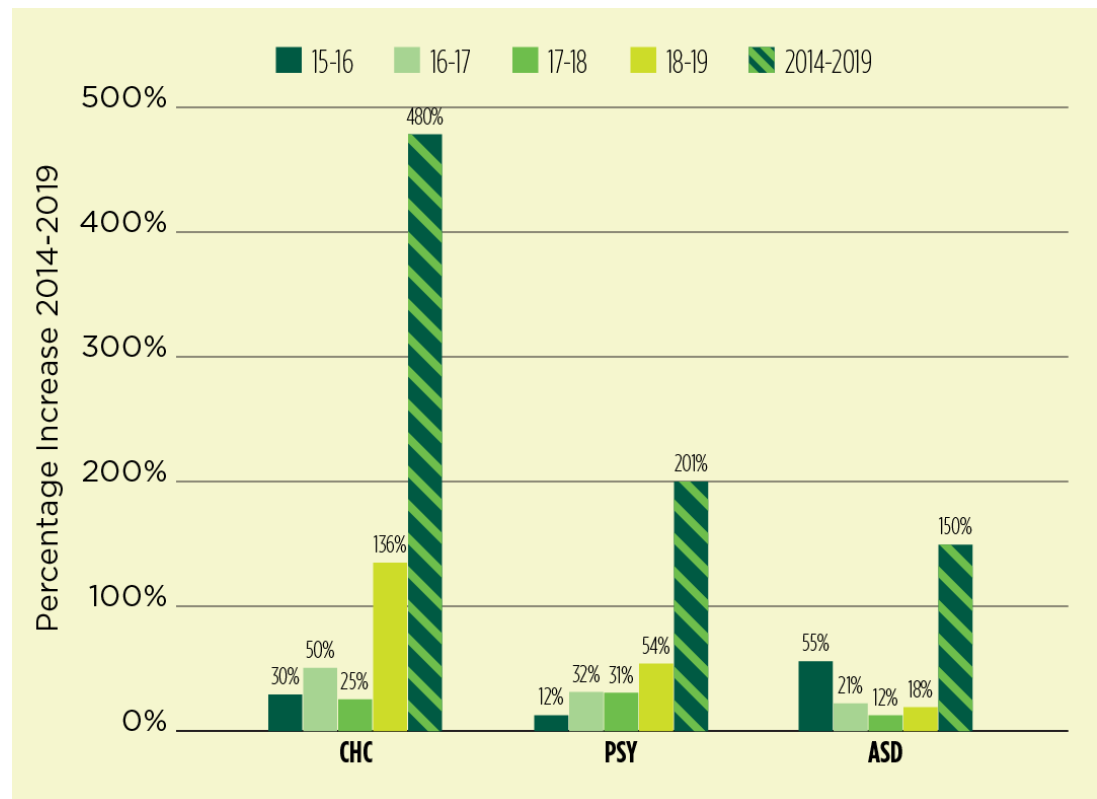


## Binghamton's experience

The number of students registering with our office continues to grow about 15% per year.

The most significant trends are in these categories:

- Chronic Health Conditions (CHC)
- Psychological Disabilities (PSY)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)



## Emotional dysregulation

Emotional dysregulation is the failure to regulate emotions appropriately and effectively.

One study's findings indicate that “symptom severity in each of the core features of autism, including **deficits in social and communication functioning, repetitive behaviors**, and **sensory abnormalities**, is significantly related to emotion dysregulation.” (Samson et al., 2013)

## Possible contributing factors

Factors that may contribute to emotional dysregulation in ASD students entering college include:

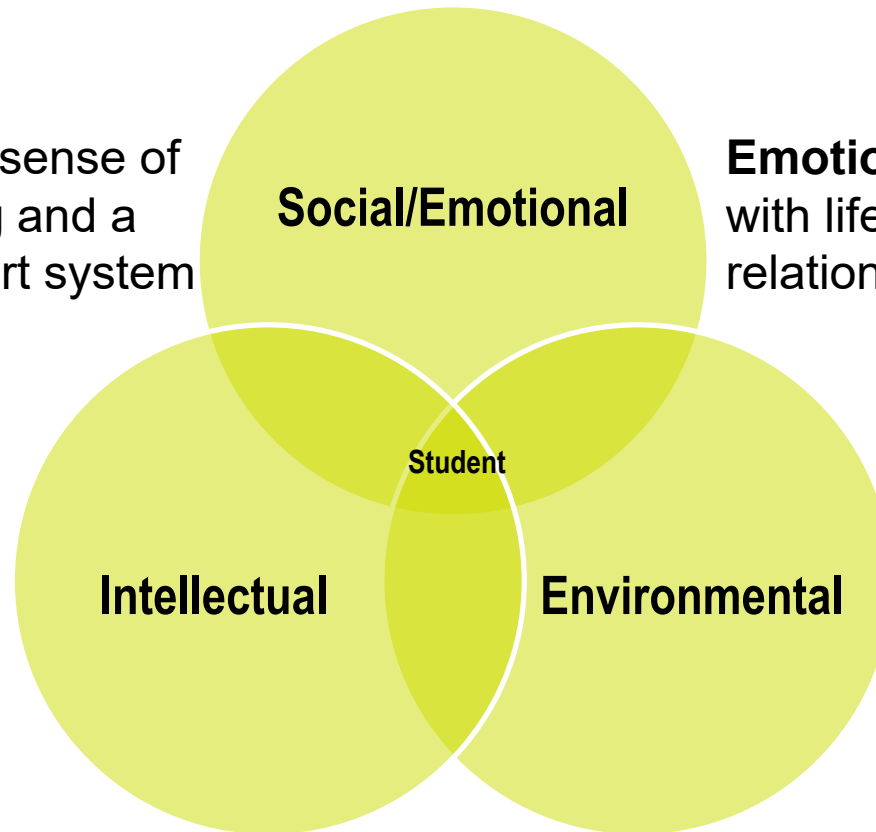
- Transitions in general
- Executive functioning difficulties
- Routine changes
- Group work
- Roommate/suitemate challenges
- Fire alarms



# Wellness for ASD students

**Social:** Developing a sense of connection, belonging and a well-developed support system

**Emotional:** Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships



**Intellectual:** Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills

**Environmental:** Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being

# Opportunities for indirect impact



- Awareness and acceptance campaigns
- Specific trainings
- Enhancing current programs and services



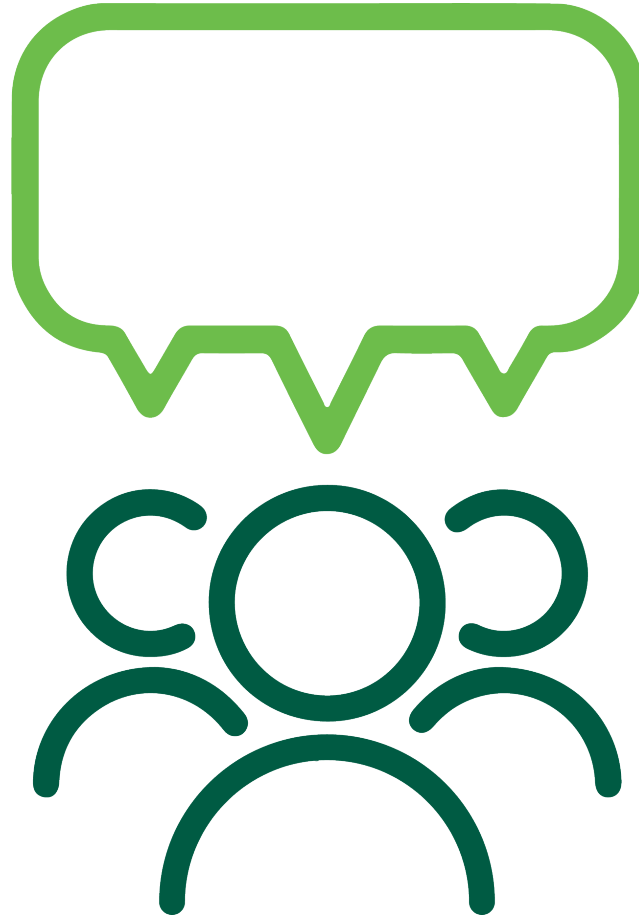
## Opportunities for direct impact

- Peer mentoring or coaching programs with individuals trained in neurodiversity
- Targeted skill development
- Supportive living environments
- Specialized employment/internship programs
- Social programming
- Summer transition programs

## Binghamton's response

- Working group tasked with University response
- Autism initiative for employment/internship opportunities
- Hiring clinical psychologist in the PhD program as GA
- Development of a peer mentoring program
- Development of an app to help ASD students problem solve
- Sensory room
- ASD focus group
- ASD training for University police, Res Life, faculty and staff across divisions

# Discussion



# References

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